

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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Memorandum

Serial: COINS/014/70
DATE: 9 January 1970

TO : COINS Project Manager

FROM : Chairman, COINS User Training Panel

SUBJECT: Semi-annual Report, July - December 1969

I. GENERAL

A. MEMBERSHIP OF CUT PANEL - On 31 December 1969, membership of the COINS User Training (CUT) Panel consisted of the following persons:



B. USER REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED - A list of things a COINS-like system should provide to users was compiled by the CUT Panel and submitted to the Project Manager on 3 December. It was pointed out that many of the items are not available to COINS users, and that some of them can probably never be obtained in COINS as it now exists. It was recommended, however, that the list (modified, if necessary) be made a permanent part of the COINS objectives, as the success of the system (user acceptance) will be controlled primarily by the degree to which these features are provided. A copy of the list is included as Attachment 1.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FILE SPONSORS AND USERS IDENTIFIED

A draft COINS Operational Procedure on this subject is being coordinated by the CUT Panel, and is expected to be published in January or February 1970.

II. TRAINING

A. GENERAL - No formal classroom training on COINS was conducted at any of the agencies during this period. For most of the period, so many problems existed throughout the system that even the few persons attempting to use it were able to



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get only a very low percentage of answers to their queries. Thus it would have been folly to undertake a training program that would create additional users. Toward the end of the period, however, sufficient improvements were made to allow for the entry of a few more users. By then the test and analysis phase of the Experiment was upon us; therefore, a decision was made to concentrate on establishing one or two families of users at each agency. This plan does not require formal classroom training; it can be accomplished much more effectively with an "on-the-job" training approach. Unfortunately, however, even this plan has met with only limited success at most of the participating agencies, for reasons explained below.

B. EFFORTS MADE TO ESTABLISH USER FAMILIES - The object here was to establish one or two families of users at each agency who could and would make regular operational use of at least one file at one of the other agencies. The results are summarized below by agency (also, see Attachment 2).

CIA - Information on COINS files has been distributed and meetings with users have been held, including at a terminal. Several analysts have expressed interest, and have levied queries, but they have met with very little success. Major problems have been (1) the CIA short operating period which makes it nearly impossible for them to complete many queries especially to NSA, and (2) frequent aborts from DIA caused by saturation of their system queue (limited to 50 jobs which are batch processed).

25X1

NIC - No family of regular users has been established at NIC. Analysts there are interested in the Soviet Air Activity files, now being maintained at DIA, but these files are not current enough for their needs. Also, they are interested in [redacted] files, but their experience with these files has shown them to be incomplete and/or out of date. Further, the DIA problems with NSA, CIA and NPIC are also experienced by NIC.

25X1

NPIC - No user family has been established at NPIC, and cannot be while their system is out of the COINS network (they pulled out in November for security reasons). Before they pulled out they had no operational users, and only operated in COINS for two hours per day.

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STATE - The only files of interest have been those on [redacted] but few operational queries have been generated. Problems are: (1) the files are not complete and current, and (2) the same problems that DIA has with NSA, CIA and NPIC.

C. SPECIAL EFFORTS TO INFORM AND MOTIVATE USERS - In addition to several reference documents that have been published or are planned (see section III), the CUT Panel is scheduling seminars on specific COINS files or file families. The first one was held at DIA in September on the NSA Field Post Number files, and a second one on the same subject is planned at DIA for January 1970. Also, a larger seminar on biographics in COINS is being planned for early February 1970. Others will be scheduled when it is determined that existing COINS users need them, or if/when the system capability is such that it can successfully handle a fairly heavy volume of queries from a broad range of users. Unfortunately, the latter does not appear to be possible in the present environment.

III. USER AIDS

The heaviest emphasis on COINS user support during this period was in the production of reference materials. The objective is to make it possible for a user to teach himself most of what is required for operating in COINS. Documents published and planned are described below.

A. CATALOG OF COINS FILES PUBLISHED - In order to acquaint users and potential users with all files available in COINS, a catalog of files was published in September 1969. Each file was described in two ways. A first page included general information, e.g., content, size, source of data, date span, who maintains it, security classification, areas covered, and remarks. A second page (more where necessary) presented the information fields in the file, including their size, code name used in addressing them in the system, and an expanded descriptive name. The catalog also pointed out that more detail is needed for making queries and provided instructions on how to obtain it from the COFSA file at DIA.

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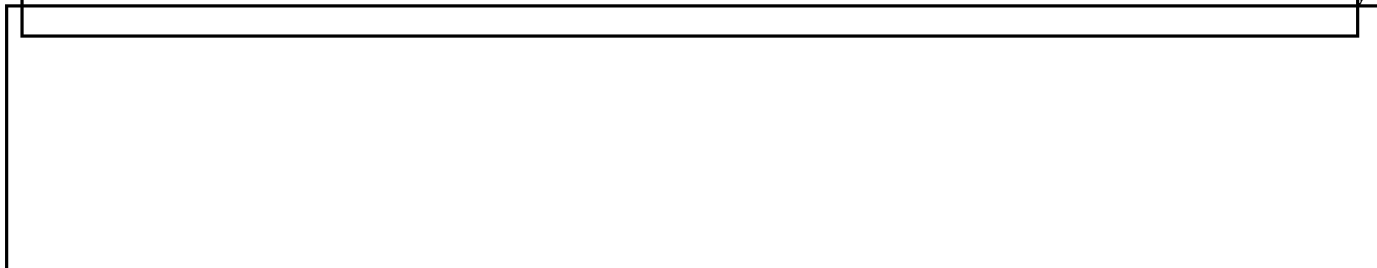
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B. COFSA FILE EXPANSION - It had been expected that by the end of this period all COINS file descriptions would be included in the Community On-line File Structure (COFSA) file at DIA; however, the DIA programmer who was working on this project moved to private industry, and delays resulted while a new programmer was being assigned and oriented. COFSA is now being up-dated and more file descriptions are being added. Coverage at the end of December included all DIA and CIA files, and one of the NSA files.

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E. PUBLICATION OF COINS WORKBOOK PLANNED - A workbook designed for use at any one of the participating organizations is expected to be distributed in March 1970. It will contain detailed descriptions of message headers/trailers/receipts for each agency and replicas of queries and answers for every file in COINS. Experience has already shown that users with no previous exposure to COINS can begin making operational queries immediately by following these samples. This has been the most effective way to begin with a new user, and is all that is needed for those with limited requirements.

F. PUBLICATION OF COMBINED RETRIEVAL GUIDE PLANNED - A retrieval guide is being compiled which will present every available feature of a COINS query, step-by-step, and how each feature is handled by each of the participating systems. It will show in detail the similarities and differences (some in direct conflict) between the four languages, and should

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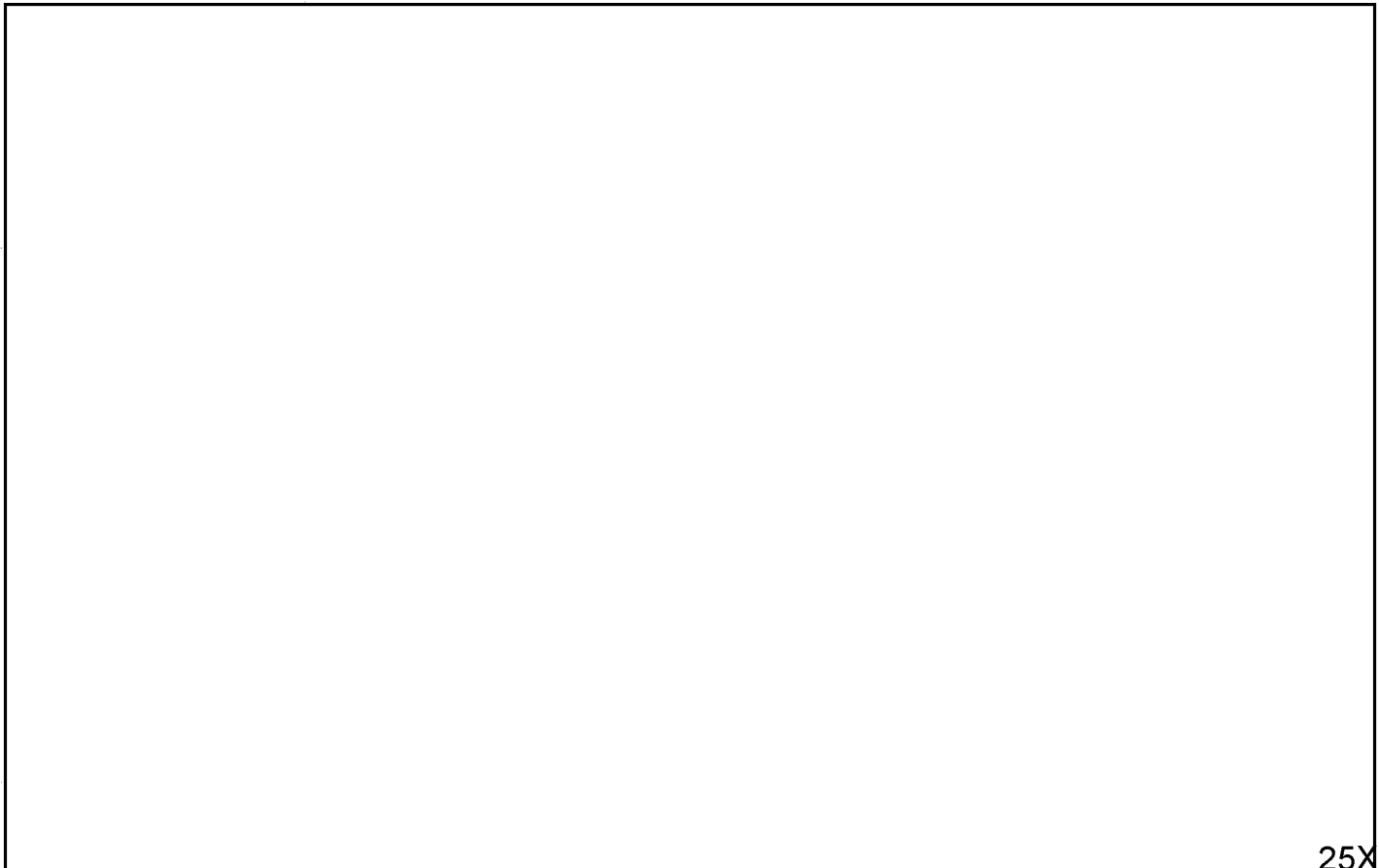
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greatly assist users in minimizing their errors when querying more ~~Approved For Release 2005/04/27 : CIA-RDP80B01139A000100050027-9~~ very handy reference for those arguing the merits of a common user language in COINS.

IV. COINS DATA APPLICATIONS

A. OCTOBER - DECEMBER STATISTICS - Attachment 2 depicts the estimated inter-agency operational usage of COINS files during the first three months of the test analysis period. Note that the heaviest use is made by NSA, primarily because of the availability eight hours per day of several usable files at DIA. The other agencies do not have this advantage.

B. NSA ANALYTIC USAGE OF COINS DATA - Following is a list of the NSA projects on which COINS data from other agencies is being used on a daily or weekly basis (the file getting heaviest use is the Electronic Order of Battle file, EOBOA): 25X1



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ATTACHMENT 1

THINGS A COINS-LIKE SYSTEM SHOULD PROVIDE TO USERS

1. Answers (i.e., few queries should have to be re-entered through no fault of the user), and within a reasonable time (approx. 10-15 minutes).
2. Accurate and current data.
3. Automatic notification when the network switch or one of the participating systems comes up or goes down.
4. Accurate and current descriptions of files.
5. Status of query messages, e.g., receipts from the parent system, the switch and the system to which the query is addressed.
6. Specific reasons for a query abort.
7. Common data standards (including brevity code names).
8. A common query language, with the following capabilities:
 - a. Extract on any field or combination of fields within a file, any data or combination of data within a field, and/or extract from a specified geographic area.
 - b. Sort on any field or combination of fields, within a reasonable maximum.
 - c. Perform counts or totals on any field.
 - d. Inter-file logic allowing the user to query more than one file through one input message, or answers should include reference(s) to other files in the network which may contain the desired answer.
 - e. Print any or all of the information desired from a file, within reasonable character limitations for each agency.
 - f. Some user capability for formatting of output.

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ATTACHMENT 1 (Cont'd)

9. Output labeled with the file name, its classification and caveats as applicable (top and bottom), the current date, the identity of the user as provided at the time of input, an indication of the date level of the file and information retrieved and an end of message indicator.

10. Expansion of codes to clear text in output.

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